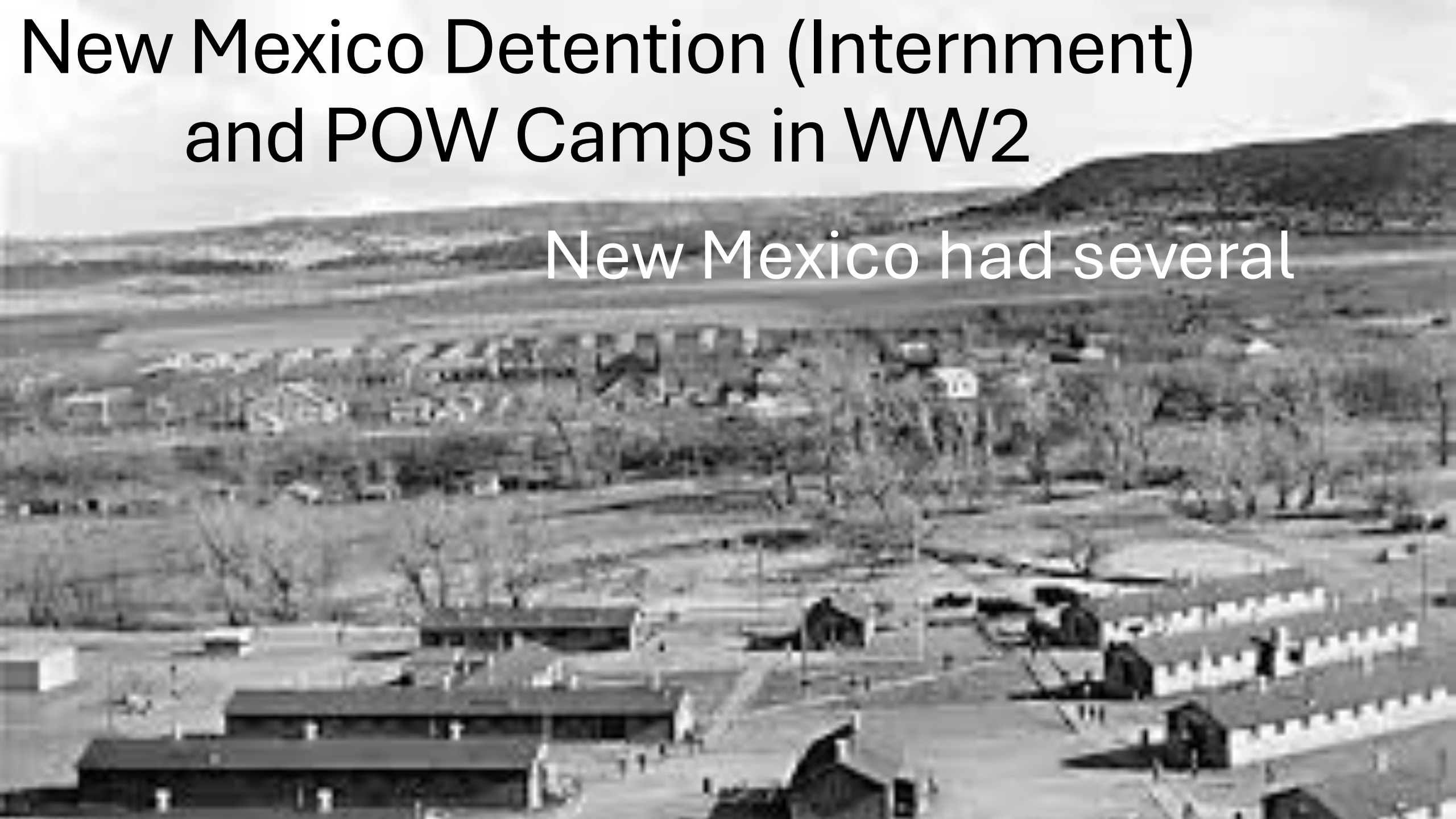
New Mexico Detention (Internment) and POW Camps in WW2



New Mexico had several

Internment Camps –The US not at it's best

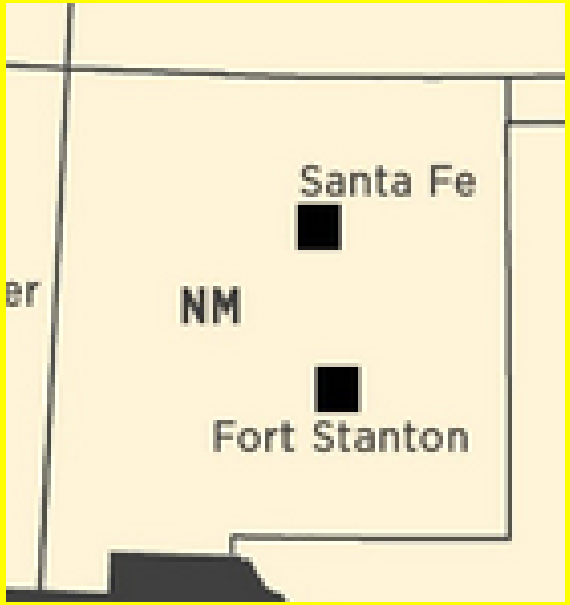
On March 23, 1942, using the authority delegated to him under Executive Order 9066, Western Defense Commander General John L. DeWitt ordered the removal and relocation of all people of Japanese descent living in California, western Oregon, western Washington, and southern Arizona.

https://www.nps.gov/subjects/worldwarii/confinement.htm

Japanese Internment Sites around the United States

Some sites are not indicated because they were Camps operated by the US Army.

WCCA – Wartime Civil Control Administration



There were two distinct types of detention camps in New Mexico

Internment or Confinement Camps where undesirables were kept.

Prisoner of War Camps were used to confined those enemy combatants who were captured during the war.

We will look at both!

But Why?

Pearl Harbor was still fresh on everyone's minds.

The best answer based on prevailing thinking, the Japanese people in the US were easiest to profile.

Physical characteristics made identification easy even if they were already US citizens.

There was worry about sabotage and spying in the US.

Was there loyalty to the Japanese Empire?

Yet other Axis countries US citizens were not treated in this way.

Later in the war, these US Citizens would be recruited to serve in the US Army.

They would be sent to Europe and fight with distinction and honor.

An estimated 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II, of which 20,000 joined the Army. Approximately 800 were killed in action. Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese-American_service_in_World_War_II#

Generations of Japanese Citizenry

- From 1885 to 1924, approximately 200,000 Japanese immigrated to Hawaii and 180,000 Japanese immigrated to the mainland United States.
- Their success met with prejudice and an anti-Japanese movement. Discriminatory laws prevented Issei from becoming naturalized United States citizens.
- They were barred from owning land, marrying whites and sending their children to schools attended by whites. Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924 barring any further immigration from Japan.

Issei – First Generational Japanese

Built a vibrant community, raising families, starting churches, and forming social and business organizations.

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/history/#immigration

Nisei - 2nd Japanese Generations

Born in the U.S., spoke English like other Americans and often did well in school, these U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry faced discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations (restaurants, stores, hotels, swimming pools, etc.) and social and civic activities.

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/history/#immigration

Japanese Confinement in New Mexico

Santa Fe

Lordsburg

Fort Stanton

Old Raton Ranch (Baca Camp)

Agencies of the Department of Justice (DOJ), including the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), ran the Santa Fe, Baca, and Fort Stanton camps, while the US Army managed Camp Lordsburg (1943 sketch below, CP)

http://npshistory.com/publications/diversity/cloe-exhibit.pdf

Santa Fe

The Densho Encyclopedia has the best articles about the Santa Fe Internment Camp and others. (See link below)

Held the most Japanese-Americans men of all camps. 4555 internees would pass through the camp existance. Men who were thought to be disloyal to the US.

Built on the site of the CCC camp (1933) on 80 acres NW of Santa Fe. NM.

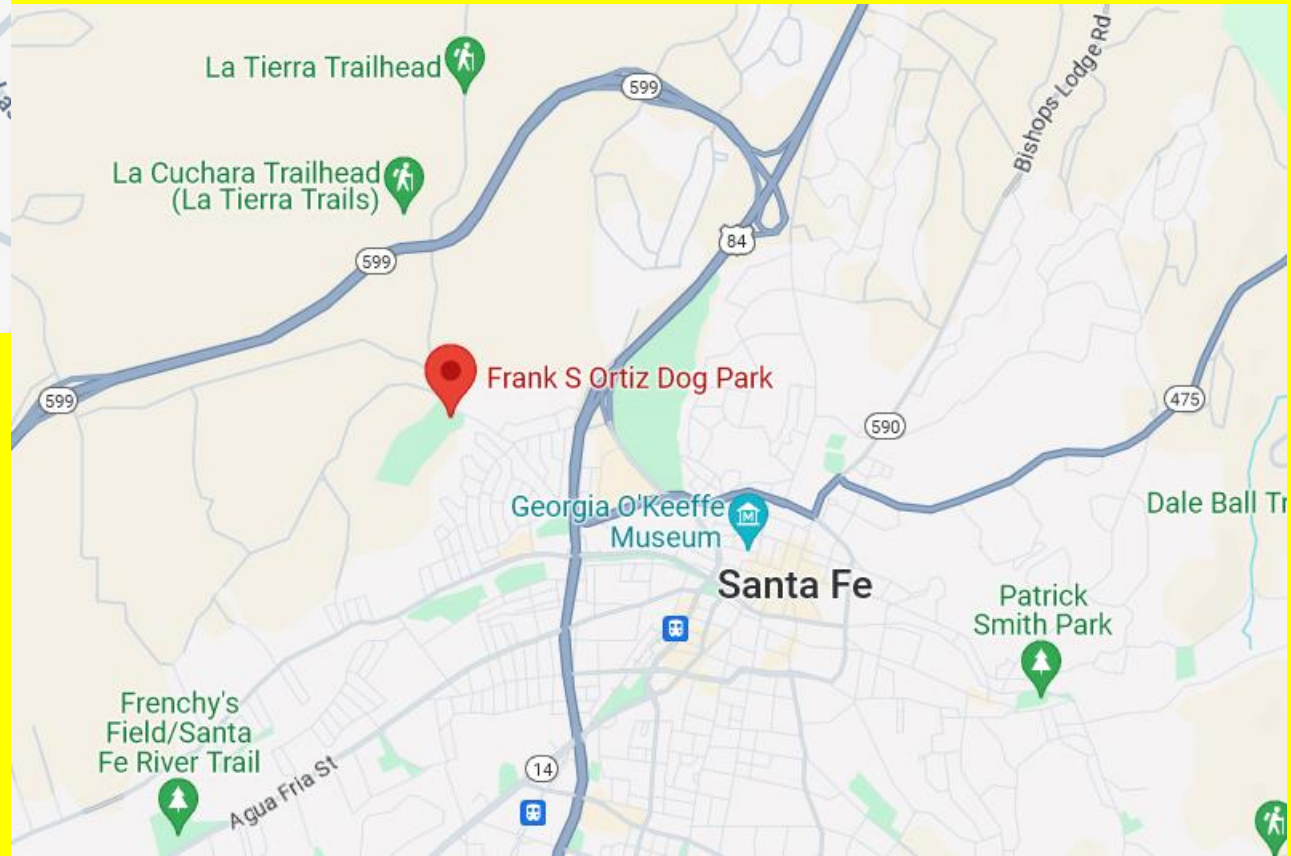
Opened in February 1942, briefly closing in September 1942, but reopened in 1943, closing in 1946.

275 Internees protested the transfer of 3 others to another camp resulting in scuffle between the Internees and INS guards in 1945.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Fe_riot

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Santa_Fe_(detention_facility)/

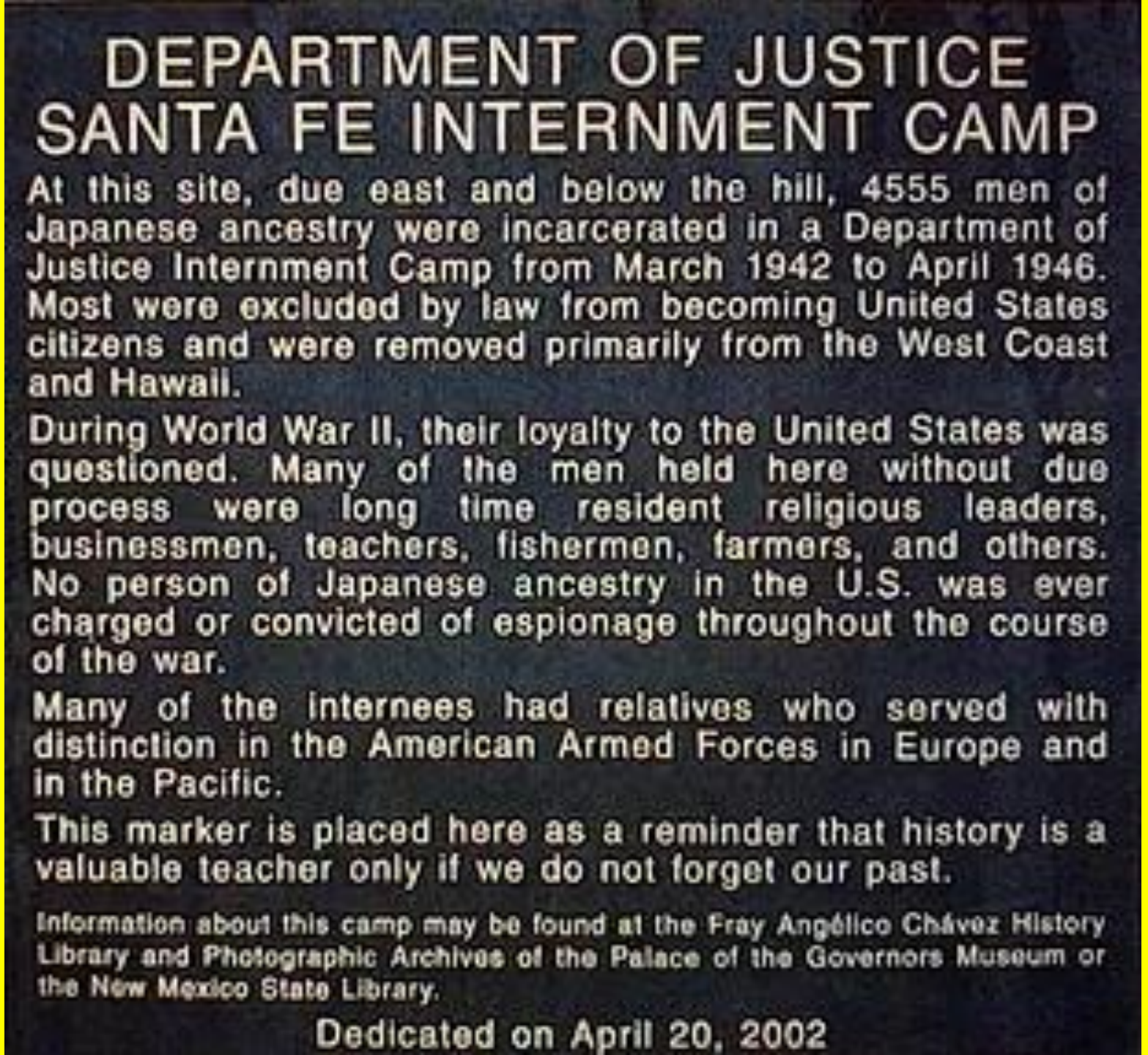
Location of Japanese Internment Camp Remembrance Site in Santa Fe located In the Frank S Ortiz Park.

Location of the Internment Camp in relation to Santa Fe, New Mexico



Monument – Japanese Internment Camp, Frank S Ortiz Park, Santa Fe, NM

Santa Fe New Mexican File Photo


DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
SANTA FE INTERNMENT CAMP
At this site, due east and below the hill, 4555 men of Japanese ancestry were incarcerated in a Department of Justice Internment Camp from March 1942 to April 1946. Most were excluded by law from becoming United States citizens and were removed primarily from the West Coast and Hawaii.
During World War II, their loyalty to the United States was questioned. Many of the men held here without due process were long time resident religious leaders, businessmen, teachers, fishermen, farmers, and others. No person of Japanese ancestry in the U.S. was ever charged or convicted of espionage throughout the course of the war.
Many of the internees had relatives who served with distinction in the American Armed Forces in Europe and in the Pacific.
This marker is placed here as a reminder that history is a valuable teacher only if we do not forget our past.
Information about this camp may be found at the Fray Angélico Chávez History Library and Photographic Archives of the Palace of the Governors Museum or the New Mexico State Library.
Dedicated on April 20, 2002

https://www.chartsantafe.com/post/santa-fe-s-japanese-internment-camp

Camp Lordsburg

Southeast of Lordsburg New Mexico

Lordsburg

Plans for Camp Lordsburg began in January of 1942, and the camp operated as an Internment and Prisoner of War Camp from June 1942 to June 1945.

More to come later.

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Lordsburg_(detention_facility)/

Arial Photograph taken April, 1946 of Camp Lordsburg

Fort Stanton Confinement/POW Camp

Fort Stanton Internment Camp

The Fort Stanton Internment Camp in central New Mexico was the first detention facility opened by the Immigration and Naturalization Service and mostly held German seamen and German enemy aliens. In 1945, it became a secret detention camp where seventeen Nikkei inmates removed from the Santa Fe camp for disciplinary reasons were held for around six months.

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Fort_Stanton_(detention_facility)/

Fort Stanton Internment Camp (Cont.)

Run by the INS, Fort Stanton was used in 1941 to hold German seaman from the scuttled SS Columbus off of the Virginia Coast.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Columbus_(1922)

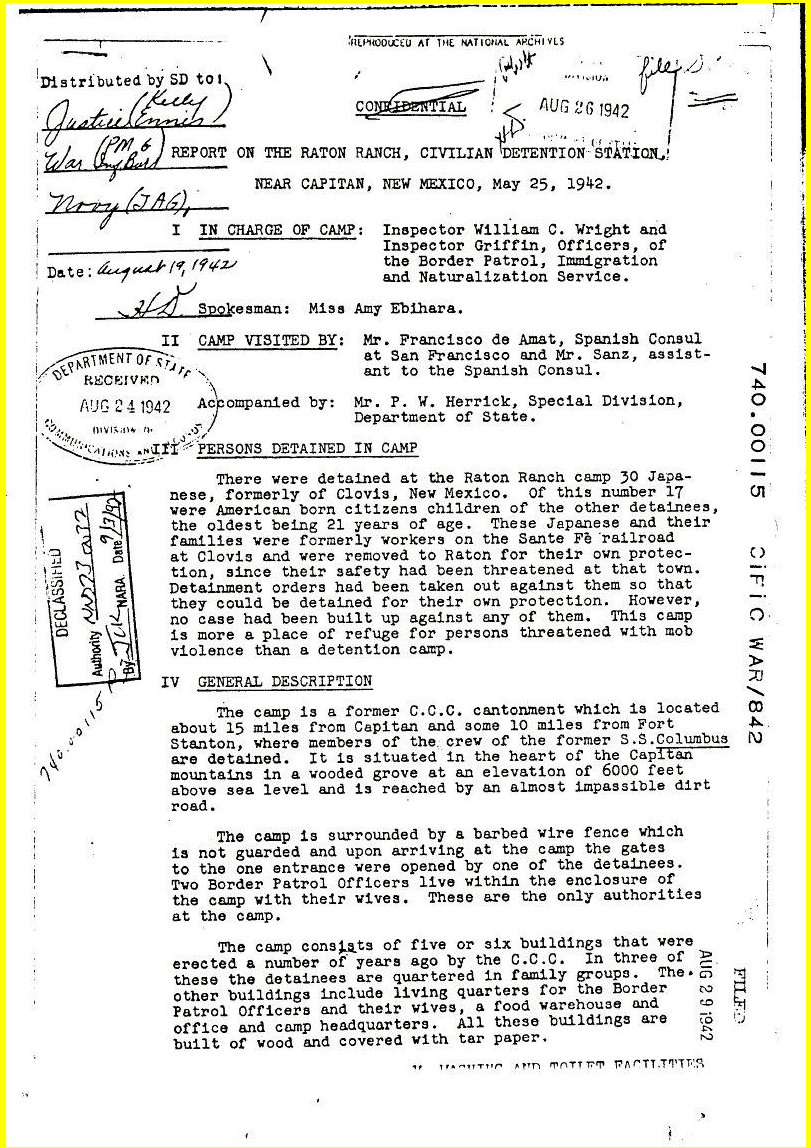
It was improved to 450 beds to hold the 411 German Seaman transferred there. It would grow to 652 by 1943.

Later, in 1943, the INS constructed a high security secret compound to hold and segregate German extremist prisoners.

1945 authorities removed seventeen men from Santa Fe and incarcerated them at Fort Stanton, in a separate high security compound. They were thought to be behind the unrest in Santa Fe.

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Fort_Stanton_(detention_facility)/

Old Raton Ranch (Baca Camp)



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Navy (JAG)

CONFIDENTIAL

AUG 26 1942

REPORT ON THE RATON RANCH, CIVILIAN DETENTION STATION,
NEAR CAPITAN, NEW MEXICO, May 25, 1942.

Date: August 19, 1942

I IN CHARGE OF CAMP: Inspector William C. Wright and Inspector Griffin, Officers, of the Border Patrol, Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Spokesman: Miss Amy Ebihara.

II CAMP VISITED BY: Mr. Francisco de Amat, Spanish Consul at San Francisco and Mr. Sanz, assistant to the Spanish Consul.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE RECEIVED AUG 24 1942 DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

Accompanied by: Mr. P. W. Herrick, Special Division, Department of State.

III PERSONS DETAINED IN CAMP

There were detained at the Raton Ranch camp 30 Japanese, formerly of Clovis, New Mexico. Of this number 17 were American born citizens children of the other detainees, the oldest being 21 years of age. These Japanese and their families were formerly workers on the Sante Fé railroad at Clovis and were removed to Raton for their own protection, since their safety had been threatened at that town. Detainment orders had been taken out against them so that they could be detained for their own protection. However, no case had been built up against any of them. This camp is more a place of refuge for persons threatened with mob violence than a detention camp.

DECLASSIFIED Authority NND 927012 NARA Date 9/13/10 By JCK

740.00115

IV GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The camp is a former C.C.C. cantonment which is located about 15 miles from Capitan and some 10 miles from Fort Stanton, where members of the crew of the former S.S.Columbus are detained. It is situated in the heart of the Capitan mountains in a wooded grove at an elevation of 6000 feet above sea level and is reached by an almost impassible dirt road.

The camp is surrounded by a barbed wire fence which is not guarded and upon arriving at the camp the gates to the one entrance were opened by one of the detainees. Two Border Patrol Officers live within the enclosure of the camp with their wives. These are the only authorities at the camp.

The camp consists of five or six buildings that were erected a number of years ago by the C.C.C. In three of these the detainees are quartered in family groups. The other buildings include living quarters for the Border Patrol Officers and their wives, a food warehouse and office and camp headquarters. All these buildings are built of wood and covered with tar paper.

V WASHING AND TOILET FACILITIES

740.00115 CIFIC WAR/842

AUG 29 1942 FILED

Located NW of Fort Stanton on the Old Raton Ranch Property (near Capitan Peak), home to about 10 Nisei men and their families who had worked at the Santa Fe Railroad Facility in Clovis NM. Later transferred to other WRA camps.

INS Report on Baca Camp, May 1942

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Old%20Raton%20(detention%20facility)/

Old Raton Ranch (Baca Camp)

In late January of 1942, 32 Japanese residents of Clovis, New Mexico, were uprooted from their homes and sent to an isolated, little-known confinement camp near Fort Stanton, called the Old Raton Ranch. The Clovis residents included the families of ten Japanese who were employed by the Santa Fe Railroad (primarily as machinists with top seniority), and who had arrived in the town between 1919 and 1922. In 1922 there was a union-led walkout and strike by the railroad shopmen that the Japanese workers refused to join. This contributed to ill feelings on the part of the Anglo workers and in turn, the railroad company favored the Japanese—they had a reputation as excellent workers who caused no trouble. Prior to World War II, the Japanese workers and their families lived rent free in a cluster of one-story buildings that were located 75 yards east of the roundhouse. Although the Japanese were largely isolated, the children attended local schools and some townspeople visited the compound to purchase fresh vegetables and items the families had imported from Japan.[1]

1. https://nmjacl.org/fort-stanton-old-raton-ranch/

Old Raton Ranch (Baca Camp)

They arrived at the Fort Stanton Military Reservation, a detention camp for some 400 German non-combatant detainees, at around 7:00 a.m. on January 24th. It was soon decided that Fort Stanton would not suffice and that the detainees would be moved to an abandoned Civilian Conservation Corps camp twelve miles away, known as Old Raton Ranch. The Japanese families spent almost a year there in harsh and extremely isolated conditions. The fourteen-acre camp had nine buildings, two electric generators, abundant water, and no fences or security guards, but it also had an inadequate sewage disposal system and was in a general state of disrepair. No government money was spent on camp repairs, but the Japanese used materials on hand to improve their conditions, and by June they were managing a thriving garden with many different vegetables flourishing.[1]

1. https://nmjacl.org/fort-stanton-old-raton-ranch/

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Old%20Raton%20(detention%20facility)/

WORLD WAR II PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS
as of June 1, 1944
Map from book:
HISTORY OF PRISONER OF WAR UTILIZATION BY THE UNITED STATES ARMY
(CMH Publication 104-11),
George C. Lewis and John Mehwa
Published 1968

New Mexico POW Camps

- Camp Albuquerque
- Camp Deming
- Camp Las Cruces
- Camp Lordsburg
- Camp Roswell
- Camp Santa Fe
- Fort Sumner

Camp Albuquerque, New Mexico

Camp Albuquerque was an American World War II POW camp in Albuquerque, New Mexico that housed Italian and German prisoners of war.

From October 1943 Italian POWs were housed in Rio Grande Park in former Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) barracks that had been built in the 1930s. The site was located north of the present day Rio Grande Zoo, founded in 1927. The Italian POWs all left six months later.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Albuquerque#

Camp Albuquerque

- From 25 July 1944 until March 1946 German POWs, most of them captured in the North Africa campaigns, were housed in these same barracks buildings. The barracks had been moved to South 2nd Street and onto 8 acres (32,000 m^2) at the north end of the Schwartzman property, and made ready for their arrival.
- Shifting prisoner populations and transfers were routine. This was done to remove pro-Nazi troublemakers, and to help break up escape attempts and their tunnel digging teams. Still, three Germans did escape from Camp Albuquerque, but two were soon recaptured.
- At peak occupancy, sometime in 1945, there were 171 German POWs in branch Camp Albuquerque. They worked on the various farms from Los Lunas to Corrales, helping in particular with the harvest in the fall.

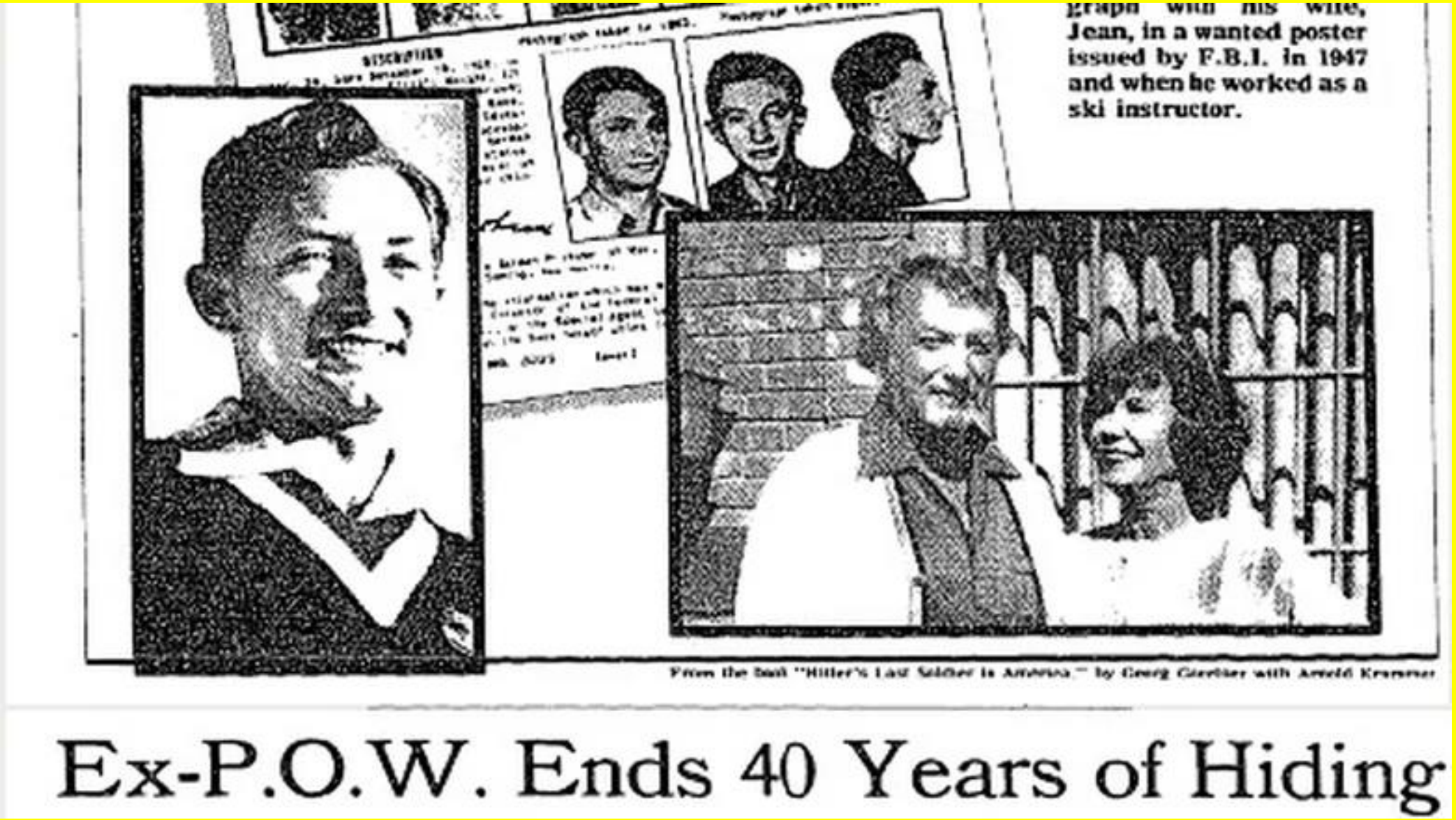
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Albuquerque#

Camp Deming POW Camp (formally Camp Cody)

Not much is known about the POW camp at Deming NM. It may have been on the site of the former WW1 US Army facility know as Camp Cody

There was an US Army Airfield nearby, but most POWs were put to work in the agricultural fields. The US was adhering to the 1929 Geneva Convention toward treatment of prisoners providing housing, food, and medical access.

The POW That Got Away! Georg Gaertner



graph with his wife, Jean, in a wanted poster issued by F.B.I. in 1947 and when he worked as a ski instructor.

From the book "Hitler's Last Soldier is Arrested," by Georg Gaertner with Arnold Krammer

Ex-P.O.W. Ends 40 Years of Hiding

https://www.grunge.com/623836/the-untold-truth-of-americas-wwii-german-pow-camps/

40 Years on the Run

Georg Gaertner escaped from the Deming POW compound and eluded authorities for over 40 years. Using the name Dennis Whiles, settling in Colorado and marrying, not even his wife new until he came in out of the cold. He was never charged for escaping

Stories:

- https://www.nytimes.com/1985/09/11/us/ex-pow-ends-40-years-of-hiding.html
- https://www.krqe.com/news/new-mexico/german-soldier-escapes-new-mexico-pow-camp-evades-fbi-for-40-years/

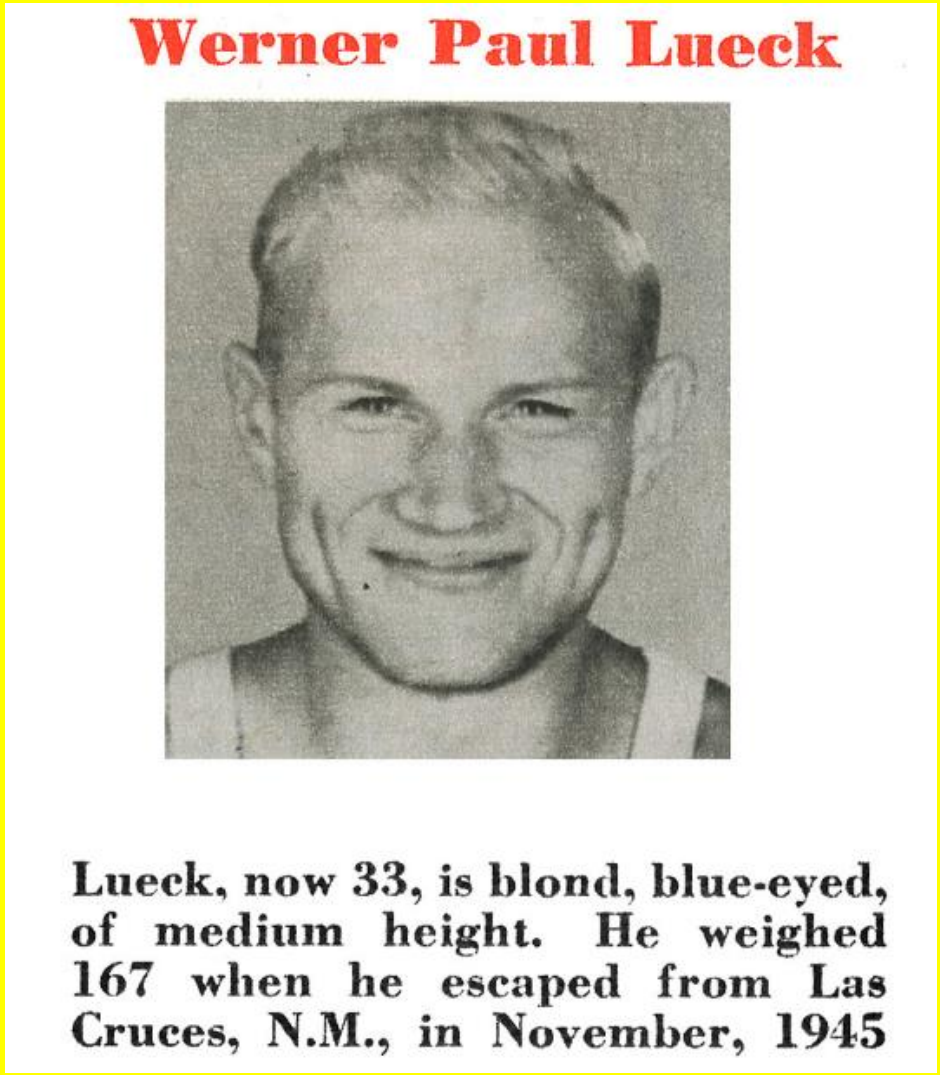
Camp Las Cruces

While Fort Bliss received POWs and were housed there, Sub Camps were established in Las Cruces and Deming, NM. Most of the posts about Las Cruces are described in the link below. Again, not much is known about Las Cruces other than it was established to help with the agriculture in the area.

The prisoners did various details on post and off post to include picking cotton crops and chiles and other vegetables during harvest. The German prisoners used to complain about doing labor in the fields, claiming it was "beneath" them to get their hands dirty, The Italian Prisoners enjoyed the farm work, as most of them had farms back in Italy.

https://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/172991-prisoner-of-war-compound-fort-bliss-texas/

Another Notable Escapee from Camp Las Cruces


Werner Paul Lueck
Lueck, now 33, is blond, blue-eyed, of medium height. He weighed 167 when he escaped from Las Cruces, N.M., in November, 1945

At Camp Las Cruces, Werner Paul Lueck escaped in November 1945. He was recaptured 1954 in Mexico City.

https://losalamoshistory.org/prisoner-of-war-camp-history-continued/

Camp Lordsburg

Initially built to house Japanese Internees. It was the largest of the army run camps and specifically built to house enemy aliens.

Operated as an internment camps from 1942 to 1943 with a peak populations of about 1500 Japanese men.

Two Japanese men were shot and killed going to the camp. It brought criticism how it was handled.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lordsburg_killings

In 1943, the Japanese Prisoners were transferred to other camps, and it became a POW camp for Italians and then for Germans POWs.
https://www.camplordsburg.com/camp

Camp Lordsburg

The Lordsburg Internment Camp was located on a 1,300 acre site around 2½ miles from the town of Lordsburg in an area Tessa Moening Cencula describes as "one of the most arid spots in the state."

The Japanese population peaked at just over 1,500 in November 1942. Of this number, about 250 came from Hawai'i.

About 90% of the internees eventually transferred to the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Internment Camp which was run by the Department of Justice.

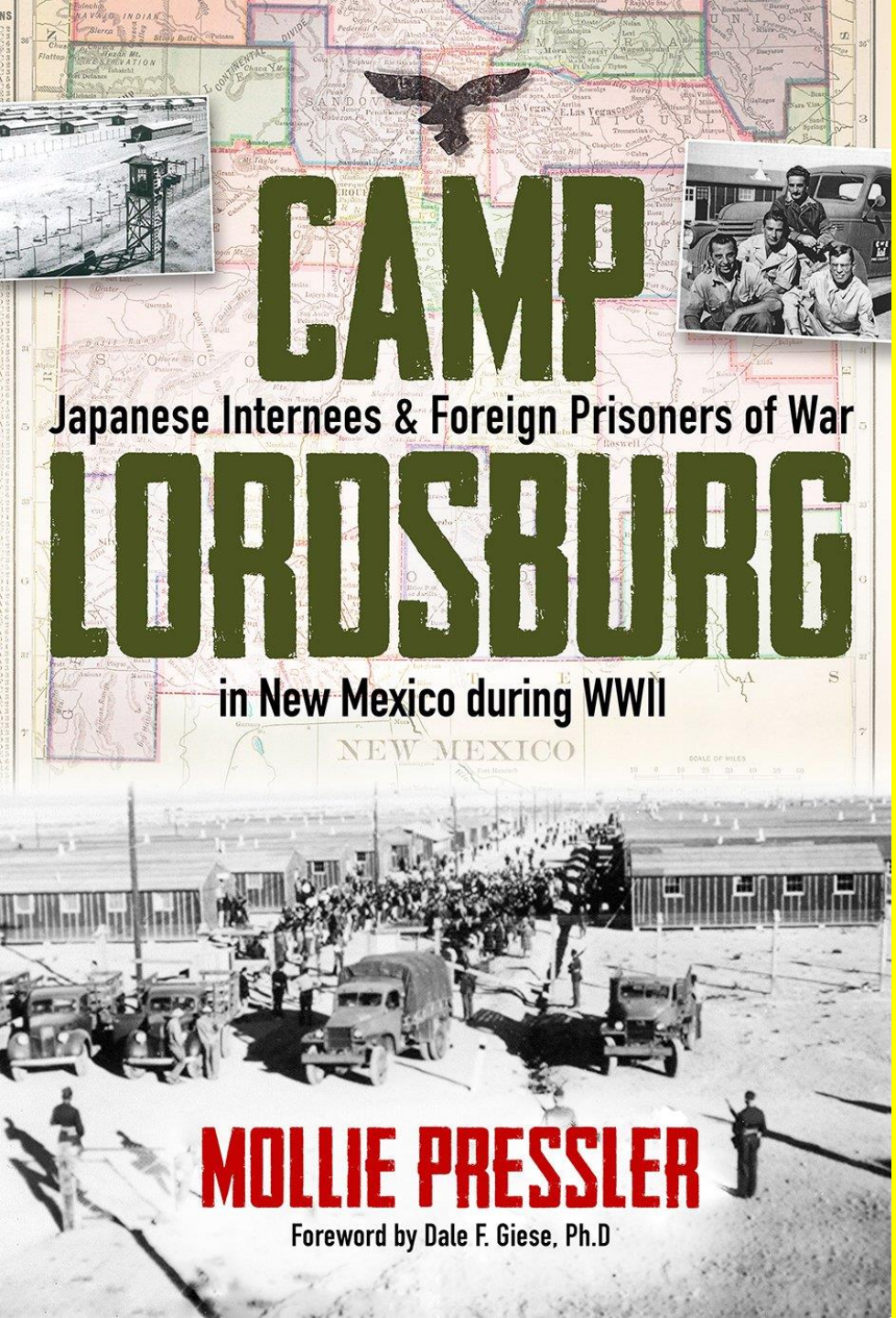
About a hundred went to the Crystal City , Texas, camp to be reunited with families, while a handful moved to the Kooskia , Idaho, internee work camp.

Lordsburg was converted for use as a POW camp, initially holding Italian POWs until the summer of 1944, then German POWs, with the number topping out at about 4,000.

After the war, the buildings at the site were auctioned off.

For the complete article, see this link below:

https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Lordsburg_(detention_facility)/



Book – Author Mollie Pressler

Can be found here:
https://www.camplordsburg.com/buy

or at the New Mexico State Library:
https://search.worldcat.org/title/1427976695

Camp Roswell

German prisoners of war doing rock work along the banks of Spring River. (Courtesy of the Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico)
By Roswell Daily Record

Orchard Park is the location of the former Camp Roswell Internment Camp.

https://www.rdrnews.com/arts_and_entertainment/vision/the-legacy-of-the-german-pows/article_efd62a0c-e02a-5f75-9ff3-3c3e19be72c8.html

Camp Roswell

- Opened November 1942 on 120 acres with 3 compounds of framed barracks with a 250-bed hospital and dental facilities for German POWs.

- Each Compound housed 1600 prisoners and a large recreation area next to the compounds which was used for exercise, tennis, soccer and croquet.

- POWs worked the cotton fields but did not like the bending and stooping. Several branch camps were established in Artesia, Mayhill, and Dexter usually in old CCC camps.

- Typically, escaped prisoners were usually caught due to the barren terrain and harsh environment. Mounted guards and tracking dogs caught up with escapees typically ending in tragedy.

- However, escapes were rare because the camp conditions was not bad, and the POWs were treated according to the Geneva Convention with decent food, housing, and exercise.

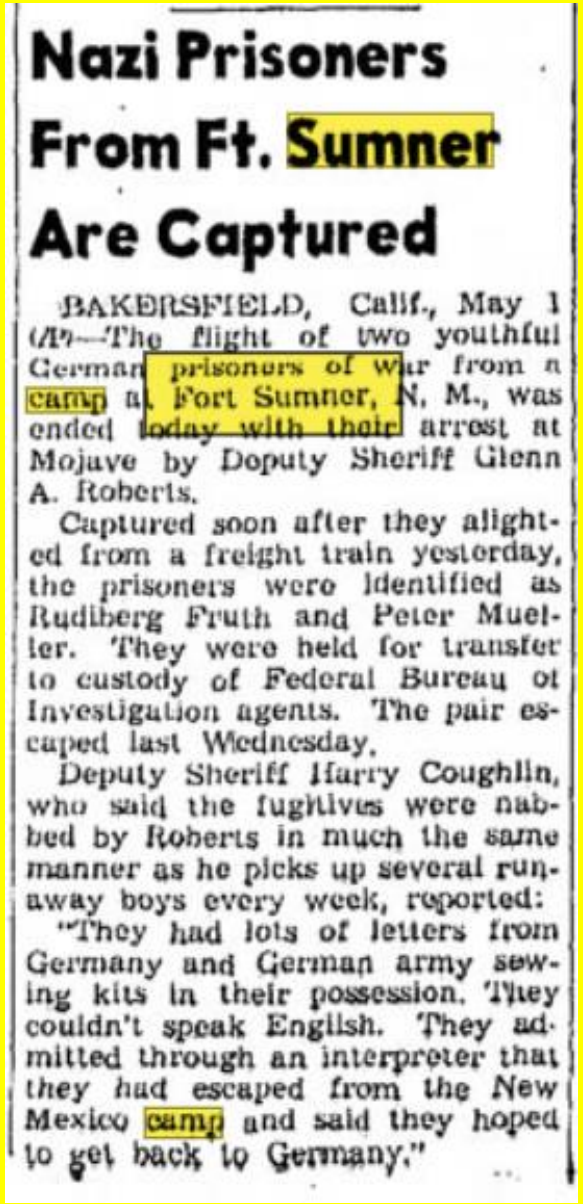
Camp Santa Fe

While Camp Santa Fe was mainly a Japanese Internment Camp, Some German POWs were sent there to work in the Brun Army Hospital

German POWs at Santa Fe had a different situation than those in camps. They were transferred to work at Bruns Army Hospital. In 1944, Bruns was designated a special center for chest diseases, and 750 beds were allotted for tuberculosis patients. The 75 German POWs who were sent to Santa Fe performed maintenance work at the hospital.

https://losalamoshistory.org/prisoner-of-war-camp-history-continued/

Fort Sumner Branch Camp



Nazi Prisoners From Ft. Sumner Are Captured

BAKERSFIELD, Calif., May 1 (AP)—The flight of two youthful German prisoners of war from a camp at Fort Sumner, N. M., was ended today with their arrest at Mojave by Deputy Sheriff Glenn A. Roberts.

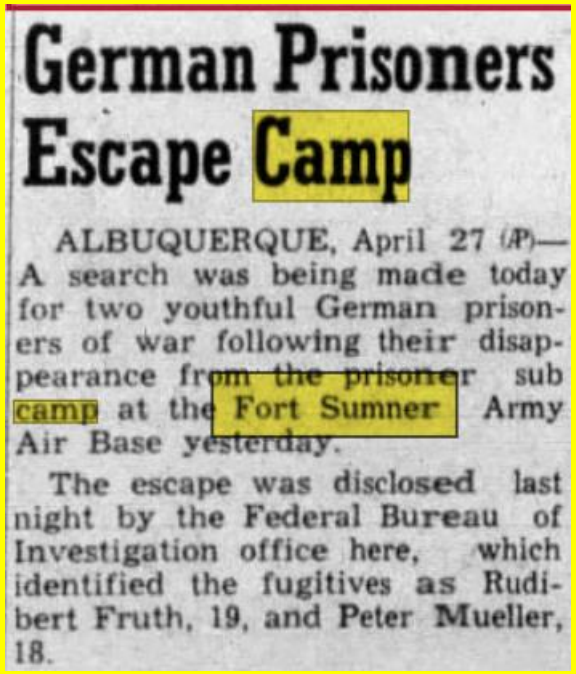
Captured soon after they alighted from a freight train yesterday, the prisoners were identified as Rudiberg Fruth and Peter Mueller. They were held for transfer to custody of Federal Bureau of Investigation agents. The pair escaped last Wednesday.

Deputy Sheriff Harry Coughlin, who said the fugitives were nabbed by Roberts in much the same manner as he picks up several runaway boys every week, reported:

"They had lots of letters from Germany and German army sewing kits in their possession. They couldn't speak English. They admitted through an interpreter that they had escaped from the New Mexico camp and said they hoped to get back to Germany."

Fort Sumner was a branch camp where POWs were used in the construction of the Army Airfields used in the area.

Like this article says, prisoner escapes did happen but usually the POWs were caught quickly. Mostly because they couldn't speak English.



German Prisoners Escape Camp

ALBUQUERQUE, April 27 (AP)—A search was being made today for two youthful German prisoners of war following their disappearance from the prisoner sub camp at the Fort Sumner Army Air Base yesterday.

The escape was disclosed last night by the Federal Bureau of Investigation office here, which identified the fugitives as Rudibert Fruth, 19, and Peter Mueller, 18.

Carlsbad Current-Argus
Thu, Apr 27, 1944 ·Page 1

Clovis News-Journal
Mon, May 01, 1944 ·Page 1

Both articles were found on Newspapers.com

Summary

New Mexico housed Japanese, Italian, and German Prisoners around the State. Mostly in the southern areas.

Numerous articles about New Mexico POWs, Internment and POW camps. Both written from former POWs, Japanese families, and local histories.

There are Historical Markers at some of the sites.

German and Italian POWs were treated better than the Japanese Internees. The POWs had the luxury of the US adhering to the Geneva Convention. Prevailing thought a happy prisoner is not likely to escape.

After the war, the POWs were repatriated back to their home countries.

Japanese Internees were not so fortunate. Given bus tickets and $25 to send them back to where their homes used to be only to find them looted or sold off.

Summary

The Five who eluded the authorities (Collier's Magazine, 1953):
Escapees: http://www.oldmagazinearticles.com/ww2_Esapees_pdf

More on Georg Gaertner (Dennis Whiles) and others.
https://sigforum.com/eve/forums/a/tpc/f/320601935/m/9710076054/p/1

Records pertaining to POWs and Internees maybe found at FamilySearch:
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/United_States_World_War_II_Prisoner_of_War_Records

or the National Archives:
https://search.archives.gov/search?query=German+POWs&submit=&utf8=&affiliate=national-archives